

8/07/2006 This Week in Congress

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August 7, 2006

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Welcoming the Big Red One to Fort Riley

Tuesday marked a long-anticipated and historic day for Kansas and our nation as the headquarters of the Army's 1st Infantry Division - the "Big Red One" - returned to Fort Riley. I attended the formal welcome ceremony on the Post's Cavalry Parade Field. Along with members of the community, soldiers and dignitaries, I watched with pride as the flag of the Big Red One was unfurled and this prestigious division was officially home in Kansas after a ten year absence in Germany. This event was the collective result of the hard work and years of effort by many at the local, state and federal level. It was truly a day to celebrate.

The Big Red One's return is wonderful news for local communities and our state. Over the next few years, Fort Riley's population will nearly double and the surrounding communities are estimated to grow by 30,000 people. Fort Riley's impact on the state's economy, now at more than \$870 million annually, will grow substantially with additional military

construction and as soldiers, civilian workers and their families arrive.

Tuesday's ceremony included the inactivation of the 24th Infantry Division, the transfer of authority to the 1st Infantry Division, and the 1st Infantry Division change of command. It featured music by the 1st Infantry Division's band, a cavalry charge by the Post's Mounted Color Guard, and speeches by military leaders. Major General Carter Ham assumed command of the division and the post. The ceremony also included a fond farewell to Major General Dennis Hardy, outgoing commander of the 24th Infantry Division and Fort Riley. During his three years on Post, Hardy oversaw the deployment of tens of thousands of troops and will now take over as deputy commanding general of the Third Army in Kuwait.

The oldest division in the Army, the legendary 1st Infantry Division was formed for World War I and continues to play a critical role in the defense of our nation. It is now tasked with the crucial mission of forming and training military transition teams to deploy to Iraq and Afghanistan to build up these nation's security forces.

Opposing Non Science-Based Environmental Standards

On Monday, I asked Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Stephen L. Johnson to not go forward with its proposed rule that attempts to regulate coarse particulate matter. I was joined by 31 other Members of Congress who do not support the proposed regulation of coarse particulate matter.

The proposed rule, which revises the National Ambient Air Quality Standards of the Clean Air Act, was published on January 17, 2006, by the EPA. Coarse particulate matter includes substances like dust that are produced from tilling of soil, planting and harvesting crops, cattle romping in feedlots, or mixing of livestock feeds, among other things. If allowed to continue, EPA's proposal could have a devastating impact on agriculture in the United States.

Representatives Hold Hearings, Site Visits to Discuss Border Security, Immigration

Since 1995, Congress has dramatically increased spending on border security and immigration enforcement and more than doubled the number of Border Patrol agents, from 5,000 to 12,000. However, despite these improvements, illegal immigrants continue to flood across our borders and make their way into our country. It is clear we need a new approach to border security and that is what the House is working to provide.

The House wants strong border security legislation that the President can sign into law this year. Members are holding hearings and conducting site visits to talk to the people who deal firsthand with the problem of illegal immigration. These 21 hearings are scheduled throughout the month of August in 13 states across the U.S.

House Passes Measures to Increase Availability of Alternative Fuels

The House passed legislation last week to expand infrastructure necessary to increase the availability of alternative fuels at gas stations across the country. H.R. 5534 establishes a program for independent gas stations to apply for assistance to install needed infrastructure such as E-85 pumps. I introduced similar legislation earlier this spring.

Though automakers continue to manufacture an increasing number of Flex Fuel Vehicles and America's agriculture industry gears up production of ethanol and other alternative energy sources, our fueling stations throughout the country are lacking the distribution system and infrastructure needed to bring these alternative fuels to consumers. Currently, of the 180,000 gas stations across the country, less than one percent offer alternative fuels such as E-85. In Kansas, alternative fuels are offered at about a dozen stations. This legislation could double the number of E-85 pumps in the U.S. annually and furthers efforts to reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil by utilizing the resources we having growing in our backyards.

Agriculture Subcommittee Hears from North Dakota and South Dakota Producers

This week, I convened the third farm bill field hearing of the House Agriculture Subcommittee I chair on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management in Wall, South Dakota. The hearing included discussions from North Dakota and South Dakota agricultural producers about payment limitations, disaster assistance, livestock programs, conservation, and marketing programs.

The information my Subcommittee gathers from these field hearings will play an important role in writing the next farm bill. I want to hear about what is working and what is not working in the current farm bill and what areas can be improved.

As always, I appreciate hearing from Kansas farmers and ranchers about the current and upcoming farm bills. Please visit my website to submit your comments.

Speaking at the Annual Meeting of the Kansas Bankers Association

I joined members of the Kansas Bankers Association this week for their annual meeting to provide an overview of current issues in Washington, D.C. I discussed the proposed Farm Service Agency guarantee loan fee increase and the need to preserve the wall between banking and commerce.

Community banks promote a way of life in Kansas and in many cases, the bank is the anchor for the community. Bankers play a critical role of investing in their communities and creating opportunities for jobs and housing. The future of small towns and small banks in Kansas are closely intertwined and I feel strongly that both should be preserved for the next generation of Kansans.

Visiting Sherman County Fair and Riding in the Phillipsburg Rodeo Parade

This weekend, I stopped at the Sherman County Fair to visit with area residents. Also while in Goodland, I stopped at the Visitors Information Center. The center provides travel and tourism information and attracts anywhere between 100,000 to 150,000 visitors each year.

On Saturday, I rode in the Phillipsburg Rodeo Parade. This annual event is held in conjunction with Kansas' biggest rodeo, which attracts 15,000 spectators annually. For a community of 3,000, it is an impressive event and takes the efforts of numerous volunteers.

In the Office

Jeff Borchardt, President and CEO of the Kansas City Board of Trade, was in the office this week to discuss issues regarding the Commodity Futures Trading Commission's proposed rule on acceptable practices for exchanges. Lisa Geist of Scott City was in to talk about her experience in the Lead America program.

Several people were in my office this week for a tour of the United States Capitol building, including Chris and Becky Rorabaugh of Ellis with grandson, Brandon Bollig of Topeka; Rick and Kelli Haden of Concordia with children, Leah and Kyle; Richard and Michelle Jensen of Manhattan with children, Jay and Cory; Tom and Beverly Hunter of McPherson with daughter, Kelli Ingmire; and Barbi Harris of Great Bend with children, Alby and Grant, and grandparents David and Mary Ann Harris of Michigan.

Also in for a tour this week were Bob and Polly McNellis of Olathe with children, Ryan and Megan; Roger and Sissy Morrison of Salina with grandson, Graham Dobbins of Olathe; Melanie Bailey of Hays with children, Karen, Scott, Megan and Vincent; Jerry and Barbara King of Spearville with children, Tarah and Ryon; and Richard and Marcy Erickson of Tonganoxie with children, Ann and Dane.

David and Joan Brown of Hays were in with their daughter, Jessica, to take a tour and visit their other daughter, Sarah, who is currently serving as an intern in my Washington, D.C., office. Jack and Marilyn Novascone of Wichita, parents of my Chief of Staff Todd Novascone, were also in my office this week for a tour.

Very truly yours,

Jerry